

*Delay in Use of Aircraft for Biafra*

**Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane):** Mr. Speaker, without doubt the situation in Nigeria and Biafra is urgent. It was urgent some time ago, urgent enough to bring the committee on external affairs into emergency session. Hon. members of the New Democratic party have pleaded eloquently, and have described the urgency of the situation in Nigeria. Nevertheless, here we are concerned with the urgency of debate, and it is for Your Honour to decide whether such a debate is a matter of urgency weighty enough to adjourn the normal proceedings of this house.

It has been said that this matter is before the committee on external affairs. Though it is an urgent matter, it is interesting to note that the N.D.P. members have not made any concrete proposals before that committee.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I remind the hon. member that he ought not to discuss the deliberations of the committee itself.

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** I am sorry, sir. I was carried away. The urgency of debate—

**An hon. Member:** Let me help you.

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** I need no help from the hon. member from Nova Scotia.

**Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is casting reflections on a Nova Scotia member. I am a Nova Scotian, and at no time did I make a remark about helping the hon. member. I think the hon. member owes an apology to every individual in this house from Nova Scotia. The hon. member ought to identify whoever he is addressing his remarks to.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have listened to arguments in favour of and against the motion, but should any other hon. member wish to talk about the procedural aspect of the matter I will not stand in his way. I may tell hon. members that, having heard arguments, I am now ready to exercise my prerogative and render a decision, but I see the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre wishes to continue the debate.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, addressing himself to the question of urgency of debate the President of the Privy Council if I understood him correctly, dealt with two main points. Perhaps I might be permitted to deal with them in reverse order. His second point was that this matter ought to be left to the standing

committee on external affairs and national defence. I submit that the chairman of that committee, the hon. member for St. Paul's, has answered that argument by saying that the committee can deal with this matter some day next week, at the earliest. I submit this is a matter of urgency, and by that I mean it is urgent today, tonight, this week end.

May I also say that the committee did not dispatch the Hercules aircraft. The government dispatched them after the Secretary of State for External Affairs had announced the matter in the house. The use of Hercules aircraft was raised on the floor of the house. In this motion we are not dealing with the entire problem, but only with the use of the aircraft that have been dispatched and are not being used for the purposes for which the Secretary of State for External Affairs said they would be used.

We are led to believe that these aircraft will be brought back, and that has created a new emergency that is of urgency this very week end.

As the right hon. member for Prince Albert correctly said, the other point raised by the President of the Privy Council relied on the technicality of the rules. He said the matter should not be raised under standing order 26 if it could be debated at some other opportunity. Yes, Mr. Speaker, there will be further opportunities for debate; we shall continue with the budget debate in a week or so, and that will provide an opportunity. But, as has been said by speaker after speaker, the urgency is today. I submit that the hon. member for Egmont was quite correct in saying that citation 100(2) of Beauchesne's fourth edition is fully appropriate when it says that the issue must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention.

The hon. members for Greenwood and Egmont have said these aircraft could be used tonight to save lives. There will be no pressure for that to be done if this matter is debated next week or the week after. I therefore contend that this issue ought to be dealt with here, where it arose and where it has been dealt with thus far. The government itself sent the aircraft, and the government is responsible to parliament itself.

I also contend that there is no other opportunity for this debate to take place. There will be no opportunity next week or the week after. There is an urgent need to make use of these aircraft tonight, tomorrow night and Sunday night to fly supplies into Biafra. We